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Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 03268 111458Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------111508Z 016979 /50
P 111411Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6723

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 3268

EXDIS

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PLO TS CVIS (AL BANDEK)
SUBJECT: PSD PARTY DIRECTOR SAYAH HINTS AT PLO MODERATION
AND URGES U.S. ISSUE VISA TO PLO OFFICIAL BANDEK

REF: TUNIS 3145, TUNIS 3058

1. DURING CALL ON PSD PARTY DIRECTOR MOHAMED SAYAH BY EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER ON MAY 10, SAYAH WENT TO SPECIAL EFFORT TO SAY THAT PALESTINIANS HAD LEARNED IMPORTANT LESSIONS FROM WAR IN LEBANON AND THAT "PLO WOULD SURPRISE U.S. AND ISRAEL WITH ITS MODERATION AND RESPONSIBILITY IF THEY WOULD ONLY AGREE TO TALK TO PLO." SAYAH REPEATED THIS EVERAL TIMES, AND WHILE HE DID NOT SAY SO IN SO MANY WORDS, HE CLEARLY WISHED TO MAKE IMPRESSION HE WAS SPEAKING WITH AUTHORITY AND WITH A PURPOSE.

2. ALTHOUGH EMBASSY IS IN NO POSITION TO JUDGE WHETHER SAYAH'S REMARKS ARE PART OF AN ORCHESTRATED EFFORT ON BEHALF OF PLO, WE DO KNOW THAT PLO CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBER HAYEL ABDELHAMID WAS IN TUNIS ON MAY 7 AND THAT HE SPOKE WITH NUMEROUS HIGH GOT OFFICIALS, INCLUDING SAYAH, FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTY AND PRESIDENT BOURGUIBHU IN ANY EVENT, AS PARTY DIRECTOR SAYAH IS A MEMBER OF GOVERNMENT (MINISTER ATTCHED TO PRIME MINISTRY) AND AS HE PARTICIPATES IN HIGHEST LEVEL
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GOT DELIBERATIONS, IT IS UNLIKELY HE WAS SPEAKING WITHOUT SOME FORETHOUGHT. THE PLO HAS IN PAST SOUGHT AND RECEIVED GOT DIPLOMATIC ASSISTANCE AND SAYAH'S REMARKS MAY BE ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THIS KIND OF SUPPORT.

3. DURING SAME CONVERSATION SAY TD VSO REFERRED, ALBEIT INDIRECTLY AND WITHOUT MENTIONING ANY NAMES, TO OUTSTANDING

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VISA REQUEST OF PLO OFFICIAL YOUSSEF AISSA AL BANDEK
(AKA YUSUF BANDAQ) - SEE TUNIS 3145 AND PREVIOUS. SAYAH
NOTED THAT "THERE IS A PALESTINIAN HERE IN TUNIS WHO HAS BEEN
TRYING TO GET A U.S. VISA FOR OVER A MONTH," AND HE EXPRESSED
HOPE THAT VISA COULD BE ISSUED SOON. HE EXPLAINED PURPOSE
OF TRIP WAS TO EXPLAIN PLO VIEWS AND TO DEMONSTRATE THE
MODERATION OF THESE VIEWS TO AMERICAN PEOPLE AND ITS LEADER-
SHIP. SENIOR OFFICIALS IN TUNISIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS AND IN MINISTRY OF INTERIOR HAVE ALSO RAISED
MATTER WITH US ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS, AND SAYAH'S APPROACH
INDICATES CONTINUING GOT INTEREST IN BANDEK CASE ATLHIGHEST
LEVELS.

4. IN PREVIOUS APPROACHES, HOWEVER, GOT HAS STATED VARIOUSLY
THAT PURPOSE OF BANDEK'S VISIT WOULD BE "TEMPORARY DUTY
AT TUNISIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON" OR "MEDICAL ATTENTION."
OUR SUBSEQUENT REQUESTS FOR MORE SPECIFIC INFORMATION
REGARDING NATURE OF BANDEK'S TEMPORARY DUTY AND MEDICAL
PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN EVADED BY MOFA OFFICIALS,
APPARENTLY ON HIGHER INSTRUCTIONS. GOT HAS PROBABLY TAKEN
THIS COURSE IN ORDER TO AVOID TELLING TOO MUCH OF TRUTH
OR TOO BIG A LIE. SAYAH'S DESCRIPTION OF BANDEK'S MISSION
TO U.S. IS NO DOUBT CLOSER TO TRUTH, BUT WE SUSPECT HE WAS
NOT AUTHORIZED BY CHATTY OR ANYONE ELSE IN GOT TO DISCLOSE
IT IN THIS MANNER. SAYAH IS OBVIOUSLY AWARE OF GOT EFFORTS
TO OBTAIN VISA FOR BANDEK AND HE MAY HAVE DECIDED TO USE
OCCASION OF EMBASSY OFFICER'S CALL "TOO HELP THING ALONG."
HE PROBABLY SAID TOO MUCH, BUT WE DO NOT WANT SAYAH TO
FIND THIS OUT FROM US. CONSEQUENTLY, WE REQUEST THAT ANY
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COMMUNICATION WITH GOT, EITHER IN TUNIS OR WASHINGTON,
REGARDING BANDEK'S VISA APPLICATION NOT REPEAT NOT CONTAIN
ANY REFERENCE TO SAYAH'S REMARKS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
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Concepts: PALESTINIANS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, NEGOTIATIONS, PEACE PLANS, TRAVEL CONTROLS, VISAS
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